

March 2009

The averaging period used for the following assessment was 1971-2000.

UK overview

Mean temperatures were mostly between 0.5 °C and 1.5 °C above the 1971-2000 normal, partly due to some warmer than average day-time temperatures particularly in central and eastern areas. Rainfall was close to or below normal almost everywhere, with only around 50% of average in parts of north-east England, the Midlands and Wales. It was the driest March since 2003 over England and Northern Ireland and the driest since 2002 over Wales. In contrast, northern Scotland had above average rainfall. Sunshine was above normal almost everywhere, particularly over parts of the Midlands, southern England and much of northern England where places recorded over 170% of the monthly normal.

A maximum temperature of 19.0 °C was recorded at Treknow (Cornwall) on 17th. Braemar (Aberdeenshire) recorded a minimum temperature of -9.6 °C on 5th. 78.4 mm of rainfall was recorded at Cluanie Inn (Ross and Cromarty) on 26th. A wind gust of 85 mph was recorded at Orlock Head (County Down) on 7th, and wind gusts above 70 mph were also recorded in the Northern Isles on 8th.

England diary of highlights

An unsettled first half of the month was followed by a fine, mainly sunny week before turning less settled and cloudier towards the end. The mean temperature for the month was above normal. Sunshine duration was well above normal, and it was the sunniest March since 2003. Rainfall was well below normal, especially over parts of the north-east and Midlands, making it the driest March since 2003.

1st to 14th: The first half of the month was changeable as weather systems spread bands of rain and showers eastwards. A cold front that spread a band of heavy rain eastwards during the 3rd gave totals of more than 25 mm in parts of SW England. Wintry showers followed overnight and then clearing skies led to icy roads in western areas early on the 4th. The most notable event during this spell occurred early on the 5th, when an area of low pressure brought some locally heavy snowfalls to south-west England. 15 cm of snow accumulated in parts of Devon, Somerset, Dorset and Wiltshire. This was followed by a very cold night, with the temperature at Benson (Oxfordshire) falling to a minimum of -5.9 °C early on the 6th. Atlantic fronts spread an area of heavy rain eastwards late on the 9th and early on the 10th with Liscombe (Somerset) recording 22.2 mm.

15th to 22nd: High pressure brought settled conditions. The days were often sunny in many areas, although it was dull and cloudy at times, especially near eastern coasts. On some nights locally-dense fog patches formed, particularly early on the 19th across the West Midlands and the west country, although the fog dispersed by the afternoon. In general the nights were chilly, with frosts occurring in many areas. The afternoons, on the other hand, were warm where the sunshine broke through, particularly across southern England where the temperature regularly peaked at around five degrees above the March average. Maximum temperatures approached 17 °C in the south during this spell, with 16.7 °C at St James's Park (London) on 16th and 16.6 °C at Chivenor (Devon) on 17th.

23rd to 28th: A return to more unsettled conditions as weather fronts brought further rain and showers at times. This spell was often characterised by windy, gusty conditions with sunshine and heavy, blustery showers, which were occasionally wintry on the higher ground. There was also some hail and thunder in places. Afternoon temperatures were quite close to the average for March, but strong winds made it feel significantly colder, especially near the east coast on the 28th.

29th to 31st: A quieter few days, with generally high pressure. Some weak fronts did edge in from the west on the 30th, bringing a little drizzle to northern areas, but on the whole they only served to bring the month to a rather cloudy end.

Wales diary of highlights

An unsettled first half of the month. A mainly settled week was then followed by a more changeable spell. The mean temperature for the month was above normal. Sunshine duration was also above normal. Rainfall was well below normal, making it the driest March since 2002.

1st to 14th: Showers or longer spells of rain through this period and often windy and cold but with some drier and quieter spells with overnight frosts. The wettest days were the 3rd, with over 25 mm recorded in parts of the west, and the 9th with 18.8 mm recorded at Lake Vyrnwy (Powys). It was also very windy on the 3rd with a gust of 70 m.p.h. recorded at Aberdaron (Gwynedd) in the afternoon. The showers turned wintry at times from the 4th with icy roads developing widely overnight. Overnight frosts at times, with -3.9 °C reported at Hawarden (Flintshire) on the night of the 5th. It became milder towards the end of this period but still with some slight overnight frosts. Hawarden recorded -1.2 °C on the night of the 10th, followed by a daytime maximum of 15.2 °C.

15th to 23rd: High pressure built from the south-west during the 15th bringing a more settled spell of weather. A few weak frontal systems affected Wales at times but with very little rainfall. Overnight frost and fog were the main feature of this period but with some warm daytime temperatures in sunshine. The temperature reached 16.9 °C at Trawsgoed (Ceredigion) on the 18th. A chilly night on the 18th with -2.4 °C recorded at Capel Curig (Conwy) but with daytime maxima of 16.3 °C on the 19th at Aberporth (Ceredigion) and Trawsgoed. The high pressure moved away to the south-west on the 23rd introducing more unsettled conditions.

24th to 31st: Lower pressure with occasional weather fronts affected Wales for much of this period with occasional rain or showers and often very windy. The showers were heavy at times and turned wintry for a time on the 28th. However, no lengthy periods of heavy rain were recorded as the weather systems moved through quite quickly. Temperatures were around the seasonal average with very little in the way of night frosts. Towards the end of the month, pressure built again with an anticyclone becoming centred over Wales on the 31st bringing dry but rather cloudy conditions.

Scotland diary of highlights

Changeable first half then mainly dry and settled, before turning unsettled and rather cold again. The mean temperature for the month was above normal, particularly in eastern Scotland. Sunshine duration was also above normal, especially in the south-east. Rainfall ranged from below normal in the east to well above normal in the north, so over Scotland generally it was slightly above normal.

1st to 16th: The month started bright with showers. Rain spread east on the 2nd followed by colder weather with snow showers in the north-west. A fine start on the 3rd gave way to rain and snow. This cleared northwards early on the 4th, leaving sunny spells and scattered showers, wintry on high ground. Sleet and snow moved eastwards on the 5th, though little reached the east coast, and the west brightened later. A frosty start on the 6th, with temperatures in the Highlands below -5 °C (Tulloch Bridge -7.5 °C) before rain moved in from the west. This became heavy and persistent in the west on the 7th and severe gales developed during the evening. Squally wintry showers on the 8th were accompanied by severe gales in the north, gusting to 79 m.p.h. at Lerwick (Shetland). Showers across the north and west on the 9th, wintry over high ground. The 10th was mainly dry with sunny or clear spells, but with showers in the north. Mainly cloudy on 11th with patchy light rain, becoming heavy in west during the evening, but mild with 14.9 °C at Machrihanish (Dumfries and Galloway). A showery day on the 12th, the showers more frequent in the west. Eastern areas stayed dry and bright on 13th but cloudy in west with patchy drizzle giving way to a wet evening. A windy day on the 14th

with a gust of 63 m.p.h. at Rosehearty (Aberdeenshire). Showers were frequent in the northwest with 29.8 mm of rain at Cassley (Highland). Mainly cloudy on the 15th, with rain in the north-west, mainly dry and mild elsewhere. Rain continued in the north-west overnight and into the 16th with Lusa (Skye) recording 26.4 mm. Some rain spread south-west while the north turned cold and clear after dark.

17th to 21st: The 17th was dry with some sunshine, these fine conditions continuing on the 18th in the south, while the north turned cloudier. The 19th and 20th were mostly sunny and very warm by day. Altnaharra (Highland) reached 18.5 °C on the 20th before temperatures fell to -4.5°C overnight. Cloud increased on the 21st with patchy drizzle followed by showers.

22nd to 31st: The 22nd was rather cloudy with scattered showers. The north-west became very wet overnight, with 39.2 mm recorded at Cassley (Highland). Blustery showers on the 23rd turned to sleet or snow at times in the north. Rain spread east on the 24th followed by blustery showers, these mainly in the west. It was bright and showery on the 25th and 26th, with strong or gale-force winds. The 27th had showers or longer spells of rain, with snow on hills and strong to gale-force winds. Showers turned to snow at low levels in the north and early on the 28th, then as northerly winds eased it became mainly dry. A frosty night followed in the south and east, Eskdalemuir (Dumfries and Galloway) dipping to -7.1 °C. Much of the 29th was sunny, then cloud spread from the north-west bringing some light rain. The east was bright and mild on the 30th, Leuchars (Fife) and Dyce (Aberdeenshire) reaching 14.1 °C. Shetland stayed damp and drizzly on the 31st ; elsewhere it was dry and warm with some sunshine, the temperature at Dyce reaching 17.7 °C, the warmest March day there for 10 years.

Northern Ireland diary of highlights

A changeable first half of the month was followed by a mainly settled and mild week, before turning more unsettled again. The mean temperature for the month was above normal. Sunshine duration was also above normal. Rainfall was well below normal, making it the driest March since 2003.

1st to 14th: The month started bright but with a few sharp showers. A band of rain spread from the west on the 2nd followed by colder, showery weather. The 3rd was cold, wet and windy with snow at times. The 4th had sunshine and showers. Rain on the 5th, preceded by snow, cleared to sunshine and showers later. The 6th and 7th were cloudy with rain, some heavy, with gales later on the 7th. Bright on the 8th with showers, some wintry. The 9th was similar although more general rain developed in the evening. The 10th was mainly sunny, with patchy rain early and late. The 11th was cloudy and very mild, with patchy light rain turning heavier in the evening. The 12th was bright with sunshine and scattered showers, and mild with Katesbridge (Co Down) reaching 12.3 °C. Cloudier on the 13th with a little drizzle at times. The 14th was breezy and mild with a few light showers.

15th to 22nd: Mainly dry and mild on the 15th but light rain developed in the north and west on the 16th. After a dull start on the 17th, it brightened later. After the clearance of early fog, the 18th to 20th were very mild and sunny with 17.3 °C at Castlederg (Co Tyrone) on the 18th and 15.6 °C at Ballykelly (Co Londonderry) on the 20th. Staying dry with some sunshine on the 21st and 22nd but increasing cloud meant it was less mild at 13 °C.

23rd to 31st: The 23rd was colder with sunshine and showers and strong to gale north-west winds. A dry start on the 24th gave way to rain and strong winds. Bright with scattered showers on the 25th, thicker cloud and rain later. Bright and showery again on the 26th with strong to gale force winds. More showers on the 27th, then wet with north-westerly gales later. On the 28th showers, some wintry, died out and winds eased to leave a dry afternoon with sunny spells. A frosty night followed, with Katesbridge dipping to -6.1 °C. Cloud increased on the 29th bringing light rain. Some drizzle affected the west on the 30th but most places were dry and quite mild. The 31st was dry and very mild with some sunshine, the temperature at Killowen (Co Down) reaching 16.8 °C.

